

RESEARCH REPORT

Engaging travellers to embrace more sustainable behaviours

Messaging strategies and tactics to
positively influence traveller behaviour



Booking.com

UNIVERSITY OF
SURREY

ACCOR

About this report

This report details the findings of exclusive research from a partnership between Booking.com, the University of Surrey and Accor.

In the report, we look at:

01.

The importance of sustainability

A brief overview of why sustainability matters to the tourism industry, how accommodation providers are investing to be more sustainable and why it's valuable to bring travellers along as part of that strategy.

02.

Research methodology

A look at some of the methods we used to assess not only the subjective opinions of travellers, but their objective reactions too.

03.

Four strategies to positively impact traveller behaviour and experience

A look at the four key strategies uncovered by the research, as well as ideas - taken from this project and wider industry research - on how these can be applied to sustainability messaging.

04.

See the strategies in action

An example of how all four strategies might be used for a single application - helping guests to travel more sustainably at an accommodation.

05.

Practical ideas for applying the strategies

While this research was specifically about messaging, in this section we include a few ideas on how accommodation might apply the findings from this project and the wider body of sustainability research in practical ways too.



01.
**The importance
of sustainability**



Why sustainability matters to the tourism industry

People travel for lots of different reasons, with many travellers seeking to experience new landscapes or cultures. Tourism can support communities, break down social and cultural barriers, and build awareness around the need to better protect our planet.

However, travel has significant environmental, social, and economic impacts that need to be managed. If left unmanaged, these impacts would have big implications for the travel industry, such as around:



Climate: From rising winter temperatures impacting ski seasons to wildfires causing damage to properties and holidaymakers to flee.



Water scarcity: From closing pools due to usage limits to entire properties being forced to close during peak times.



Local pollution: From unsightly rubbish or smog impacting traveller first impressions to long-term impacts on local habitats and wildlife.

But by working with other stakeholders to manage these impacts, accommodation can help to protect the traveller experience for many years to come by contributing to more sustainable tourism.



The UN's definition of sustainable tourism

"Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities."



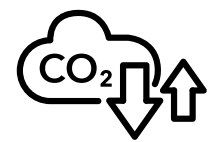
Why sustainability matters to travel accommodation providers

Research has estimated that tourism currently accounts for approximately 8.8% of global greenhouse gas emissions, with accommodation representing more than 6.37% of this¹. Additional research suggests that travel accommodation providers need to reduce their emissions by 66% from 2010 levels by 2030, and 90% by 2050².

By investing in more efficient technologies and practices to manage energy, water, waste and other factors, accommodation providers are able to reduce their impact, and potentially lower costs. In fact, research has shown that 74% of impact-reduction investments had a positive business case over a 15-year lifetime - meaning they saved more money than they cost to implement³.

But sustainability encompasses more than just emissions. Protecting local landscapes, culture and traditions are also key considerations - after all, they are the reason many people travel in the first place.

This makes sustainability a priority for many travellers, with 83% saying that more sustainable travel is important to them and 75% saying they intend to travel more sustainably in the next 12 months⁴.



6.37%

The percentage of tourism-related greenhouse gas emissions attributed to accommodation



66%

The amount of emissions that need to be reduced by travel accommodations



74%

The amount of impact-reduction investments that have a positive business case over a 15-year lifetime



83%

The percentage of travellers who say more sustainable travel is important to them



75%

The percentage of travellers who say they want to travel more sustainably in the next 12 months

¹ Urosevic, Z. (2024) High-level Roundtable 1: Raising the Climate Ambition of the Tourism Sector - from commitments to implementation (measurement and decarbonization). COP29 Baku Azerbaijan.

² World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, 2017. Global Hotel Decarbonisation Report.

³ EY Parthenon, Booking.com & OC&C Strategy Consultants, 2021. Global accommodation sector: The road to net zero emissions.

⁴ Booking.com, 2024. Sustainable Travel 2024.



Why influencing traveller behaviour matters too

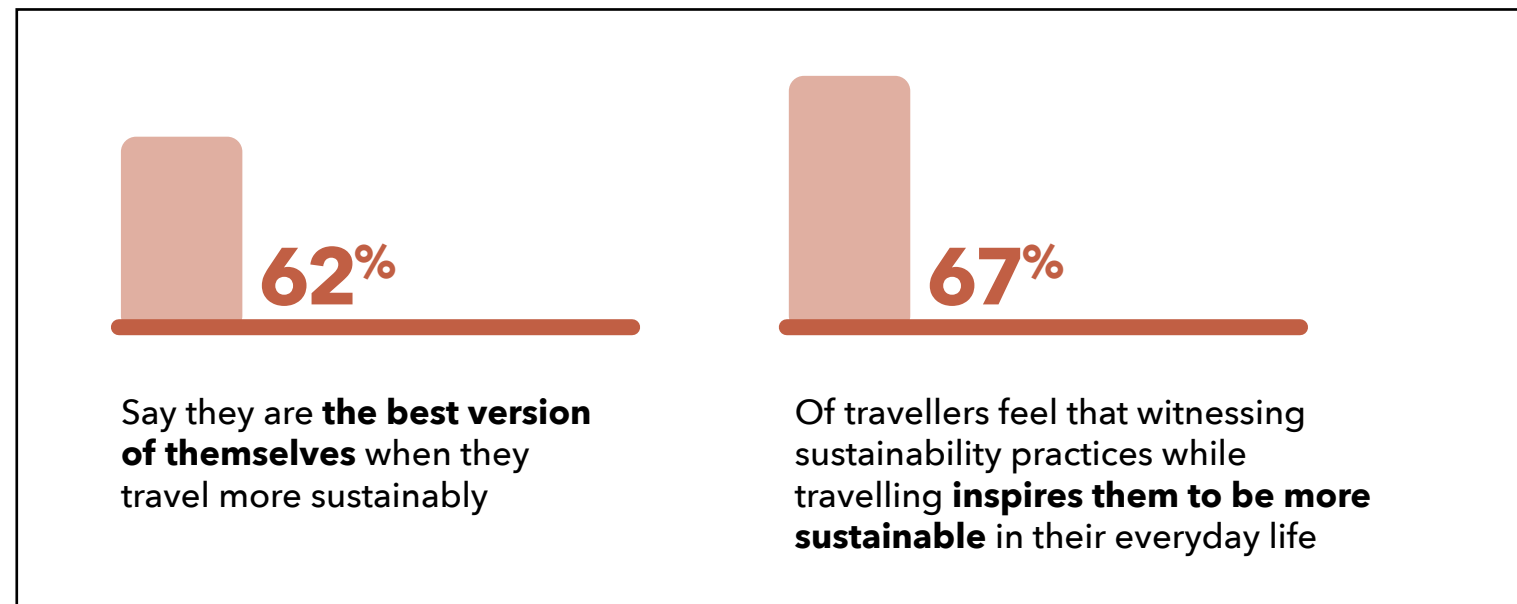
Many property upgrades require traveller cooperation to unlock the full benefits. For instance, investing in high-quality insulated windows won't matter if travellers leave them open.

While influencing guest behaviour cannot - and indeed should not - replace the actions of the accommodation itself, it can be valuable to offer travellers suggestions on how they can contribute too. Research shows that this is something travellers are very open to, with **62% of travellers in 2024 saying they are the best version of themselves when they travel more sustainably**⁴.

By designing and communicating sustainability practices in a way that directly appeals to travellers, such practices can actually enhance the traveller experience and generate additional positive emotions towards the property.

This, in turn, will mean accommodation providers stand the best chance of influencing traveller behaviour to be more sustainable. Not only will this have a direct impact on sustainability efforts (such as by reducing energy use and emissions), but there's a secondary impact as travellers increasingly factor sustainability practices into their decision making on where to stay - further building the commercial relevance of sustainability within the industry.

After all, research has shown that **67% of travellers feel that witnessing sustainability practices while travelling inspires them to be more sustainable in their everyday life**⁴.



⁴ Booking.com, 2024. Sustainable Travel 2024.



The potential impact of influencing traveller behaviour



A persuasive message alongside a smart device that shows real-time shower duration cut travellers' shower time by 71 seconds on average, **saving around 9.5 litres of water**, plus the energy and carbon emissions to heat it - all per shower⁵.

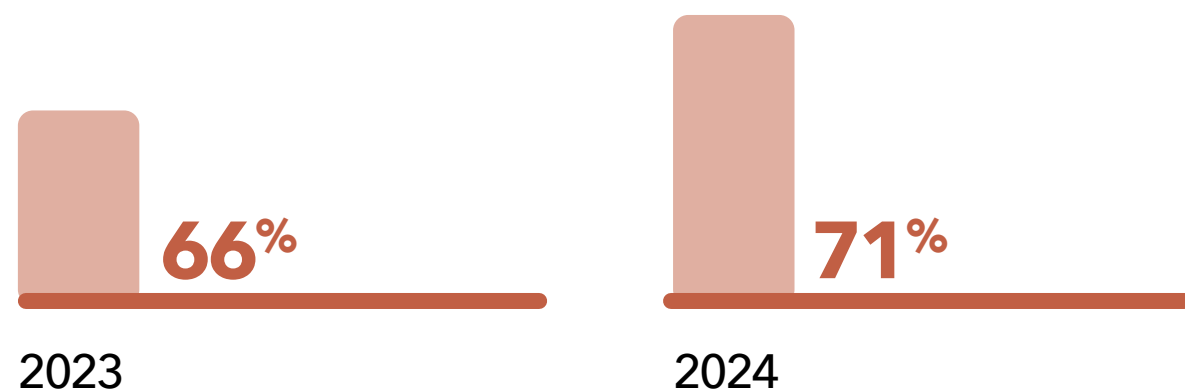


Without guidance, traveller resource consumption can far exceed the norms for the area - such as the average tourist using more than **eight times as much** water as a local resident in some locations⁶.



Food waste management - from both kitchens and traveller behaviour - can be important factors. Research estimates around **18% of annual food waste** comes from the hospitality and food service industry⁷.

Percentage of travellers **who want to leave the places they visit better** than when they arrived.



⁴ Booking.com, 2024. Sustainable Travel 2024.

⁵ Pereira-Doel, P., Font, X., Wyles, K. & Pereira-Moliner, J., 2024. Reducing shower duration in tourist accommodations: A covert true experiment of continuous real-time eco-feedback and persuasive messaging. Journal of Travel Research.

⁶ Becken, S., 2014. Water equity - Contrasting tourism water use with that of the local community. Water Resources and Industry.

⁷ Loth, S., 2019. Three food waste facts everyone needs to know. Which?.

There is also a growing desire from travellers to do more.

In 2023, 66% of travellers said they wanted to leave the places they visit better than when they arrived. In 2024, that had risen to 71%⁴.

If the business case for sustainability is strong, and there's a strong desire from travellers to do more too - how can travel accommodation providers help travellers to contribute to more sustainable practices in ways that appeal to them?

In collaboration, the University of Surrey, Accor and Booking.com conducted research with travellers to discover exactly that.



02. Research Methodology



Preliminary research

The first part of the research involved Booking.com working with Crowd DNA - a cultural insights and strategy consultancy - to speak with travellers in two phases:



In-depth interviews: Conversations with 24 travellers - 12 actively engaged in sustainability, 12 less engaged - based in the US, Germany, France and India. These 60-minute interviews explored the travellers' understanding and attitudes towards sustainability and the role it plays in their travel decisions.



Diary study: Following 22 additional travellers from the US, Germany, France and India during the planning, booking and travelling stages of their trips. This aimed to understand what role sustainability played at each stage, and to capture the highs and lows of their stay through the lens of sustainability.

From this research we identified some preliminary findings, which we then tested in lab conditions to gain greater understanding of the opinions of potential travellers.



Lab research

To confirm the findings from preliminary research, the team at the University of Surrey conducted an in-depth study⁸ with 67 participants, all potential guests of a major hotel group. They sought to test the effectiveness of different styles of sustainability messaging using two techniques:



Firstly, the study tested the participants' physiological and emotional responses to different messages using eye tracking, galvanic skin response and facial expression analysis software.



Next, the study gathered customer opinions on different sustainability messages through projective interview techniques - an advanced method of interviewing that uncovers deeper subconscious opinions, attitudes and emotions.

This allowed for a more objective insight into not just what guests say appeals to them, but what actually has an impact on their thoughts, emotions, willingness to adapt to sustainable behaviours, and on their perception of the property providing the message.

The results of these studies gave four key strategies on how to positively influence guest behaviour.

⁸ Naz, S., Font, X., Pereira-Doel, P. & Karl, M., 2024. Pleasure and comfort appeals in hospitality: A triangulation approach to pro-environmental behaviour intentions and the moderating effect of green scepticism. Manuscript in preparation.



03.
**Four strategies
to positively
impact traveller
behaviour and
experience**



01. Highlight sustainability practices including for less sustainable amenities and show how guests can easily contribute

What travellers said:

When travellers are looking for an accommodation, the sustainability information they come across is often scattered, vague, and inconsistent across channels. This means that sustainability-conscious travellers struggle to factor this in when deciding between properties, and often don't know what to expect when they arrive.

Being met by vague claims leads to a sense of scepticism.

“There are lots of places that call themselves eco-tourism, but it doesn't tell you why it's eco-tourism. I think that is a little bit of a problem.” Female traveller (28) - India

For sustainability-conscious guests, their experience is improved when they see more sustainable practices, but diminished when something falls short of their standards.

“One of the things that I noticed when I was checking in is they also have two EV charging stations at the entry of the hotel. So, definitely a little bit better than I had expected. But sometimes it's just really hard to find this information upfront if you're not already familiar with the properties.” Female traveller (43) - US

“They had a coffee maker with pods in the room, which means they had one in every single room in this resort. And those pods are so wasteful. I thought that was a horrible option and I cringed using it every morning because it just does create so much waste.” Female traveller (43) - US

But even for less sustainable practices, could the right messaging help to reassure sustainability-conscious guests that the negative impacts are being managed - and even convince other guests to play their part too?



3. Four strategies to positively impact guest behaviour and experience

How we tested this:

We tested messaging around a service that can be considered an unsustainable option by many travellers - buffets.

We compared two messages:

01. An existing hotel message:
"More than words".

02. A message showing the hotel's plan to reduce food waste:
"Plan your plate with pride".

Results:

The message showing the hotel's plan got more attention and a more positive response from participants than the existing hotel message.

By combining an emotional appeal to 'pride', clear logic via statistics, practical solutions from the accommodation, and obvious steps for the guest to participate themselves, it generated a warmer emotional response (more orange on the top examples) and more attention (the warmer red on the lower examples).

From speaking with participants, they considered the message to be clear and believable, plus it reassured them that they were part of the wider solution, and not expected to bear all the responsibility themselves.

MORE THAN WORDS



Orchestrating a kinder, smarter food process

One-third of all food goes to waste, which squanders farmland, fuel, water, and other resources. But we're changing that tune. We partner with Orbisk to convert food waste into a valuable resource: energy or compost. It's a cleaner process that supports our local communities.

Towards sustainable hospitality.

Fig 1: Emotional Heatmap Baseline Message

PLAN YOUR PLATE WITH PRIDE



Let's team up to reduce food waste.

Surprisingly, hotel customers do not eat 33% of food they put in their plate, and food waste generates 8% of global greenhouse emissions. Only put in your plate what you will eat, and we will donate the savings to local charities. Feel proud knowing your choice makes a difference!

Proud hospitality experience.

Fig 2: Emotional Heatmap Treatment Message

MORE THAN WORDS



Orchestrating a kinder, smarter food process

One-third of all food goes to waste, which squanders farmland, fuel, water, and other resources. But we're changing that tune. We partner with Orbisk to convert food waste into a valuable resource: energy or compost. It's a cleaner process that supports our local communities.

Towards sustainable hospitality.

Fig 3: Attention and Engagement Heatmap Baseline Message

PLAN YOUR PLATE WITH PRIDE



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Proud hospitality experience.

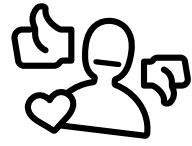
Fig 4: Attention and Engagement Heatmap Treatment Message

The stats from the research:



Satisfaction, Pride & Hope

Top three high emotions for "Plan your Plate with Pride" message.



Interest, Satisfaction, Hope/Contempt (tied)

Top three high emotions for existing hotel message.



46%

felt the existing hotel message increased their scepticism towards the hotel's sustainability initiative.



21%

felt the 'Plan Your Plate with Pride' message increased their scepticism towards the hotel's sustainability initiative.



67%

believed the hotel with the message "Plan Your Plate with Pride" to be more responsible than the existing hotel message.



Key takeaway:

- Many guests want reassurance that accommodation providers are taking steps to mitigate any negative impacts from stays.
- Then, they want clear guidance on steps they can take to contribute to sustainability efforts too.
- Doing both can increase guest satisfaction while reducing their scepticism about an accommodation's sustainability claims.



3. Four strategies to positively impact guest behaviour and experience

Ideas on how to apply these strategies to sustainability messaging:

By combining the results of this experiment along with wider findings from within the industry, accommodation providers should consider a three-step framework that could help to reassure guests:

- 01 **Provide credible evidence:** ensure your sustainability communications comply with local regulations while offering evidence-based statistics from a recognised authority to give guests impartial advice.

- 02 **Offer guests a clear role:** giving guests a direct suggestion on what they can do - if they choose to - makes it clear how they can contribute.

- 03 **Highlight existing practices:** By setting out the practical, specific and credible steps being taken - while avoiding big, vague claims such as 'eco-friendly' or 'green' - accommodation providers demonstrate that they are playing their part to address the issue.



02. Balance appeal to pleasure and comfort for optimal results

What travellers said:

Travellers can feel it's difficult to have a pleasure-filled trip while making more sustainable decisions. They can associate sustainability with a more frugal experience, which can sometimes feel more restricting.

Can we reassure guests that they don't lose enjoyment when considering sustainability?

“If I was going on some luxury trip away, I wouldn't be staying in some eco-lodge. If I was treating myself to some nice fantasy holiday I would like it to be a little bit luxurious and feel a bit more pampered”. Female traveller (40) - US



3. Four strategies to positively impact guest behaviour and experience

How we tested this:

We ran another analysis, this time testing three different messages:

01. An existing hotel message:
"More than words".

02. A comfort message:
"Your comfort comes first".

03. A pleasure message:
"Your enjoyment comes first".

Results:

The positive emotional response heatmap (the top charts) shows significantly more orange across the pleasure message - "Your enjoyment comes first" - than the other two options.

This is supported by the attention heatmap (below), which shows that the pleasure-based option attracted more engagement (the red colour) across the whole message, too.

However, while the pleasure message attracted more attention and a higher physiological response, when the participants discussed the messages afterwards, they said that they found the comfort message to be more believable.

This means that, while comfort creates a less powerful subconscious reaction, such messages can prove to be more effective at reassuring guests.

MORE THAN WORDS



Orchestrating a kinder, smarter food process

A large quantity of all food goes to waste, which squanders farmland, fuel, water, and other resources. But we're changing that tune. We partner with Orbisk to convert food waste into a valuable resource: energy or compost. It's a cleaner process that supports our local communities.

Towards sustainable hospitality.

Fig 5: Emotional Heatmap Baseline Message

YOUR COMFORT COMES FIRST



A carefree and relaxing experience with a smart food process

Relax with a comfortable and peaceful dining experience as we take away the worries of food waste. We partner with Orbisk to convert food waste into a valuable resource: energy or compost. It's a cleaner process that supports our local communities.

Towards relaxing hospitality.

Fig 6: Emotional Heatmap Comfort Message

YOUR ENJOYMENT COMES FIRST



A delightful and satisfying experience, with a smart food process

Enjoy a joyful and happy dining experience as we take away the worries of food waste. We partner with Orbisk to convert food waste into a valuable resource: energy or compost. It's a cleaner process that supports our local communities.

Towards joyful hospitality.

Fig 7: Emotional Heatmap Pleasure Message

MORE THAN WORDS



Orchestrating a kinder, smarter food process

A large quantity of all food goes to waste, which squanders farmland, fuel, water, and other resources. But we're changing that tune. We partner with Orbisk to convert food waste into a valuable resource: energy or compost. It's a cleaner process that supports our local communities.

Towards sustainable hospitality.

Fig 8: Attention and Engagement Heatmap Baseline Message

YOUR COMFORT COMES FIRST



A carefree and relaxing experience with a smart food process

Relax with a comfortable and peaceful dining experience as we take away the worries of food waste. We partner with Orbisk to convert food waste into a valuable resource: energy or compost. It's a cleaner process that supports our local communities.

Towards relaxing hospitality.

Fig 9: Attention and Engagement Heatmap Comfort Message

YOUR ENJOYMENT COMES FIRST



A delightful and satisfying experience, with a smart food process

Enjoy a joyful and happy dining experience as we take away the worries of food waste. We partner with Orbisk to convert food waste into a valuable resource: energy or compost. It's a cleaner process that supports our local communities.

Towards joyful hospitality.

Fig 10: Attention and Engagement Heatmap Pleasure Message

The stats from the research:



The Comfort message evoked the highest level of "satisfaction"

145%

increase on the existing hotel message.



The Pleasure message created the highest level of "Joy"

475%

increase on the existing hotel message.



Participants were

3x

more likely to be sceptical of the Pleasure message compared to the other two messages.

Key takeaway:

- Appealing to pleasure and comfort can be effective ways to frame messaging. Done right, such messages can remind guests that a more sustainable experience can be just as enjoyable and comforting as they'd hoped for from their trip.
- But appeals to pleasure need to be used sparingly to avoid increasing guest scepticism - even if the message is factually accurate.



3. Four strategies to positively impact guest behaviour and experience

Ideas on how to apply these strategies to sustainability messaging:

By combining the results of this experiment along with wider findings from within the industry, accommodation providers should consider striking a balance between pleasure and comfort messaging:

- 01 Pleasure messaging:** reserve for high-emotion peaks linked to specific tangible experiences that guests actively take part in - e.g. day trips and special meals.
- 02 Comfort messaging:** use for the more everyday messaging to reassure guests that their comfort and experience is always the most important factor and never compromised - aligning with their primary expectation from a stay.



03. Empower guests, don't constrain or dictate to them

What travellers said:

Our initial research suggested that travellers don't want to feel like more sustainable options are being imposed on them. Instead, they feel that using an encouraging, humble and informative tone to draw attention to information without putting pressure on them is the most effective way in communicating about sustainability.

How can messages be framed to encourage guests to take the right actions?

- “It needs to come from a place of kindness. It should be expressed in a positive fashion. Not saying, "you did this, that's not good". Instead, maybe say "this would be better".
Male traveller (26) - France
- “It should be informative rather than imposing. If you are trying to impose anything on anyone they will not accept it.” Male traveller (38) - India



3. Four strategies to positively impact guest behaviour and experience

How we tested this:

We tested two messages designed to reduce the time guests spent in the shower:

01. An implicit and assertive message:
"Turn down the volume".

02. An explicit and empowering message:
"Every drop counts".

Results:

While the implicit and assertive message led to increased attention and physiological responses, some wording - e.g. "limit your use" - felt constraining. This meant it was met with a mixed emotional response.

In contrast, the explicit and empowering wording - e.g. "you have the power to make a big impact" - received a less emotionally-charged response, but it successfully motivated and encouraged guests by putting the control in their hands.



Fig 11: Emotional Heatmap Baseline Message



Fig 12: Emotional Heatmap Treatment Message

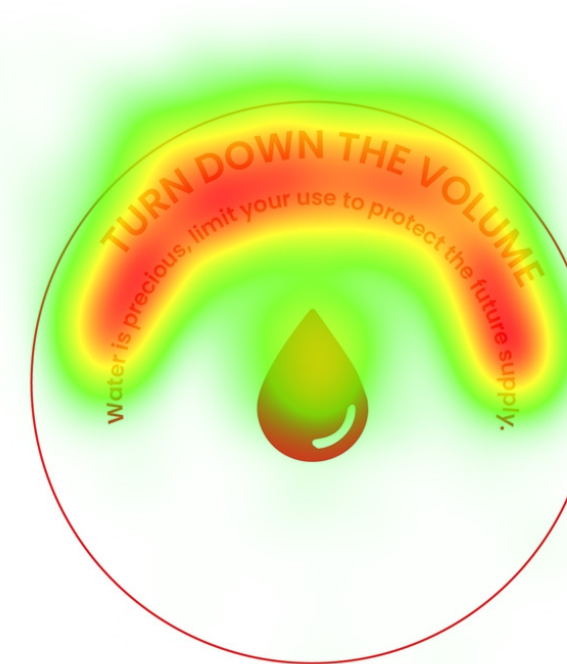


Fig 13: Attention and Engagement Heatmap Baseline Message

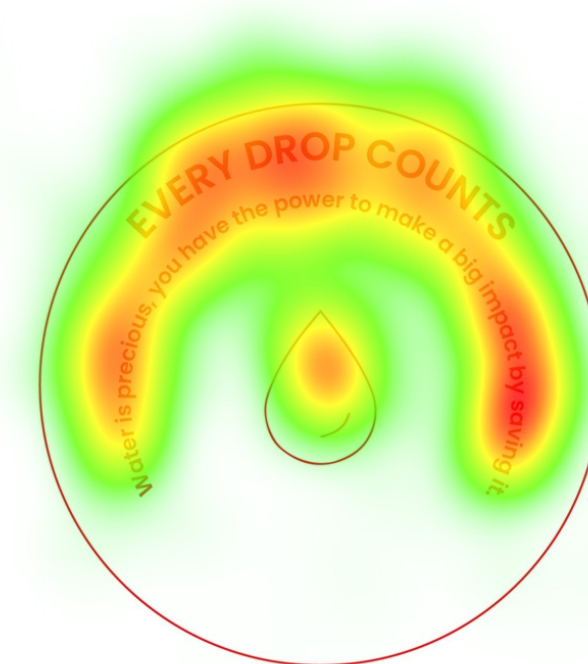


Fig 14: Attention and Engagement Heatmap Treatment Message

The stats from the research:



Hope, Satisfaction, Pride

Top emotions from empowering "Every drop counts" message.



Anger, Fear, Contempt

Top emotions from the assertive "Turn down the volume" message.



55%

were sceptical of the assertive message (4x more than the empowering message).



70%

thought the empowering message made the hotel seem more responsible towards environment and sustainability.

Key takeaway:

- Guests react negatively to what they see as assertive or demanding messaging. Such messaging has a negative impact on both their experience and their view of the property.
- In fact, of all the messages we tested, this was the one that was viewed most negatively.



3. Four strategies to positively impact guest behaviour and experience

Ideas on how to apply these strategies to sustainability messaging:

By combining the results of this experiment along with wider findings from within the industry, accommodation providers should consider avoiding messages that tell guests what to do in a demanding fashion. Such messaging can actually result in sustainability communications backfiring as guests do the opposite simply to assert their control.

Instead, messages should empower guests. By sharing knowledge to help guests make the right decisions for themselves, accommodation providers can make guests the hero of the story - and help them feel that they're making the right choices for the right reasons.

“We’re not imposing anything on you or asking you to limit yourself. We're saying, if you do it, you have the power to make a difference, and it will help - it will be great, and you’ll be doing something good. That’s a better message than asking someone to limit themselves. Nobody wants to feel restricted; everyone wants to make a conscious decision and feel good about it.” Female traveller (47) - France

“So, it gives control and freedom of choice, which is nice. The other one feels more authoritative like it's trying to take control. There's nothing inherently wrong with that, but it's not the best way to spread the message. I think it's better to be friendly, informative, and encourage action.” Male traveller (22) - Spain



04. Help guests act as responsibly as they do at home

What travellers said:

Travellers who already adopt more sustainable practices in their daily routine told us that they want to continue these when travelling, but often feel constrained by the accommodation's processes. This leads to a sense of loss of control.

But when guests are travelling, does appealing to 'home' enhance their experience (because of control) or diminish it (because it's perceived as less luxurious)?

“At home, do you change your towel every day? No. Why would you do it when you're at the hotel then? These are good practices. I wouldn't do it at home, so why would I do it when on vacation? Why is the hotel imposing it?” Male traveller (26) - France

“There are things that I can't have influence over, for example the food I'm given at the hotel. You have to adapt to the situation because you're not at home.” Female traveller (52) - Germany



3. Four strategies to positively impact guest behaviour and experience

How we tested this:

For this experiment, we tested two messages:

01. A home message: "Just like at home".

02. An existing hotel message: "Get in sync with the Earth".

Results:

The attention towards both messages was relatively similar (as seen on the red and green chart to the right).

However, the 'home' messaging created a much more positive emotional reaction from guests - as demonstrated by the warmer orange colour on the charts beneath.



Fig 15: Attention and Engagement Heatmap Treatment Message



Fig 16: Attention and Engagement Heatmap Control Message

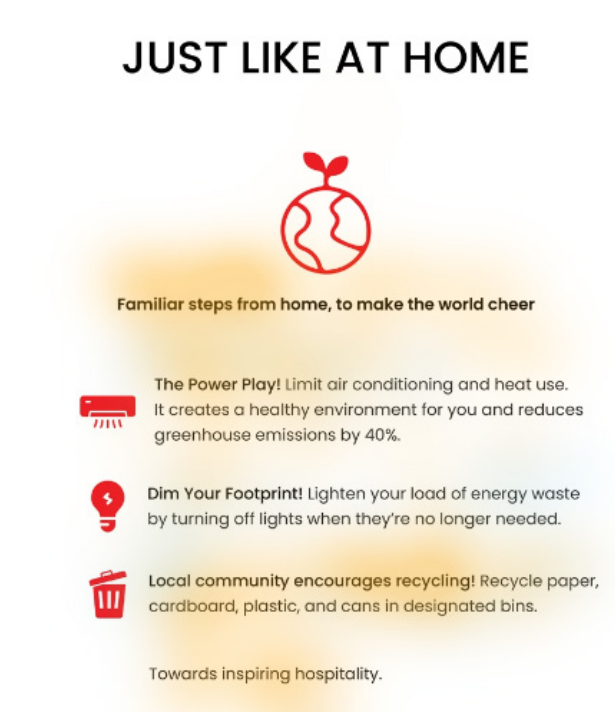


Fig 17: Emotional Heatmap Treatment Message



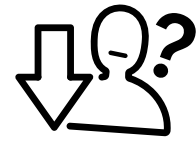
Fig 18: Emotional Heatmap Control Message

The stats from the research:



2^x

The Home message made the accommodation look **twice as responsible** as the existing hotel message.



2^x

The Home message **reduced consumer scepticism** by more than double the existing hotel message.

Key takeaway:

- Using messaging that taps into feelings of 'home' can evoke warmth and positive emotions from guests.
- It makes them trust accommodation more, and makes them less sceptical about both the claims and the property delivering it.



Ideas on how to apply these strategies to sustainability messaging:

By combining the results of this experiment along with wider findings from within the industry, accommodation providers should consider appealing to 'home' messaging in appropriate places to make sustainable actions feel familiar, relatable and intuitive.

By removing friction and tapping into personal norms - or usual behaviours - there is less of a cognitive burden placed on guests. They don't have to think about whether or not to be more sustainable - or how to be more sustainable - they just continue to do what they usually do.

This can create a sense of comfort and a positive experience.

“Those are just continued practices for me that I would have done anyway and that I continue from my lifestyle at home, whether it be conserving energy in the room, maid service, laundering. So I think that's really important that [the hotel] documents that and has put that up as an option” Female traveller (43) - US



04.
**See the strategies
in action**



Helping travellers to move around more sustainably at the destination

One thing that came up often in the research was that guests want to move around more sustainably at their destination. So, let's consider this issue using the four strategies we've just learnt.

01. Highlight sustainability practices - including for less sustainable aspects - and show how guests can easily contribute

Accommodation providers might want to highlight what facilities are available while potential guests are still planning their trip. Examples might include recommending shuttle services so guests don't default to a taxi, or drawing attention to EV charging facilities so guests can confidently rent an electric vehicle.

Each of these offers guests reassurance that they can make more sustainable choices.

“The resort I was staying in has a shuttle and I really felt this was a better option than using [a taxi] every time because it picked up a lot of people from the resort. By using it I tried to cut down on individual rides and so I felt like I was making a difference and was so grateful that the resort had that option.”
Female traveller (43) - US

02. Balance appeals to pleasure and comfort for optimal results

Reassuring guests that their comfort comes first is paramount. Highlight what's on their doorstep. Offer umbrellas for local walks. Tell them to phone the receptionist who will organise a taxi if they find themselves stuck in the rain. Such simple gestures can help them to feel more comfortable exploring the local area.

Then for bigger trips, highlight the pleasure of more sustainable options. For instance, they might consider hiring a car for a day trip, but may make other plans if they appreciate the incredible views the local trains might offer.

03. Guests want to be empowered, not constrained or dictated to

Offer guests more sustainable options, but remember they're on vacation. Some indulgences are likely even from the most sustainability-minded travellers.

Provide information on local bus schedules to remove the uncertainty and friction, but support guests if they still choose a taxi.

04. Help guests act as responsibly as they do at home

Help guests to feel like a local. If they feel confident navigating the bus routes, or know where they can walk, they will feel much closer to the local area, and may be more inclined to return.

After all, using a hotel's complimentary bikes to take a scenic route through the area to visit the beach for the day can make for a far more powerful memory than jumping into a cab.

“In the hotel I stayed in Washington DC, the bike share programme was in the parking garage, which was so nice. I could just go right from the hotel and start biking”
Male traveller (19) - US



05.
Practical ideas
for applying the
strategies



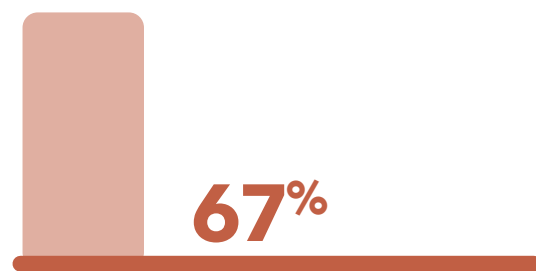
Practical ideas for applying the strategies

In the previous section we revealed the research findings around how framing sustainability messaging can impact the effectiveness of that messaging.

However, there are plenty of strategies - from this research and the wider body of sustainable tourism research - that can be applied in more practical ways. Here are some ideas to consider to help boost efficiency and show guests that sustainability is a priority for your property.

01. Demonstrate credibility by achieving a third-party sustainability certification:

Having a third-party certification is an effective way to show travellers that you have practices in place to meet a range of sustainability-related criteria while reassuring them that your claims have been verified by an independent authority. Many online platforms also allow travellers to filter for third-party certification, which could help you to reach more potential guests.



More than two-thirds of travelers (67%) agree that all travel booking sites should use **the same sustainable certifications or labels**⁴

⁴Booking.com, 2024. Sustainable Travel 2024.

02. Help staff be more sustainable too:

Offering staff the information and resources they need to consider sustainability themselves - as well as additional training on how to support guests more directly - can help to foster a sense of pride among employees. Plus it helps guests to feel inspired and to recognise that you live up to the standards your messaging speaks of.

03. Make more sustainable choices the default:

Removing friction and offering the right information at the right time can reduce the need for guests to make unnecessary decisions. This in turn can help to make the more sustainable option the more comfortable option too. For instance, having blankets available to use in outside areas can cut the need for heating while adding a cosy feel to the trip.

"One thing that was really interesting was that a local bakery came and gave you local produce and bread every morning and every evening. It's made with local ingredients and it's a sustainable way to support the community when you travel."
Female traveller (28) - India

04. Actively support the local community:

Telling guests about the activities, attractions, family-owned restaurants and other authentic experiences that are within walking distance can help them support the local area while reducing their travel emissions. Properties can also partner with local organisations to offer more direct support - such as food donation - and to provide unique ways for guests to get involved directly with the local community.

"We organised beach clean ups with the local community. It was really cool to have everyone together. We learnt about it from our host." Female traveller (26) - Germany



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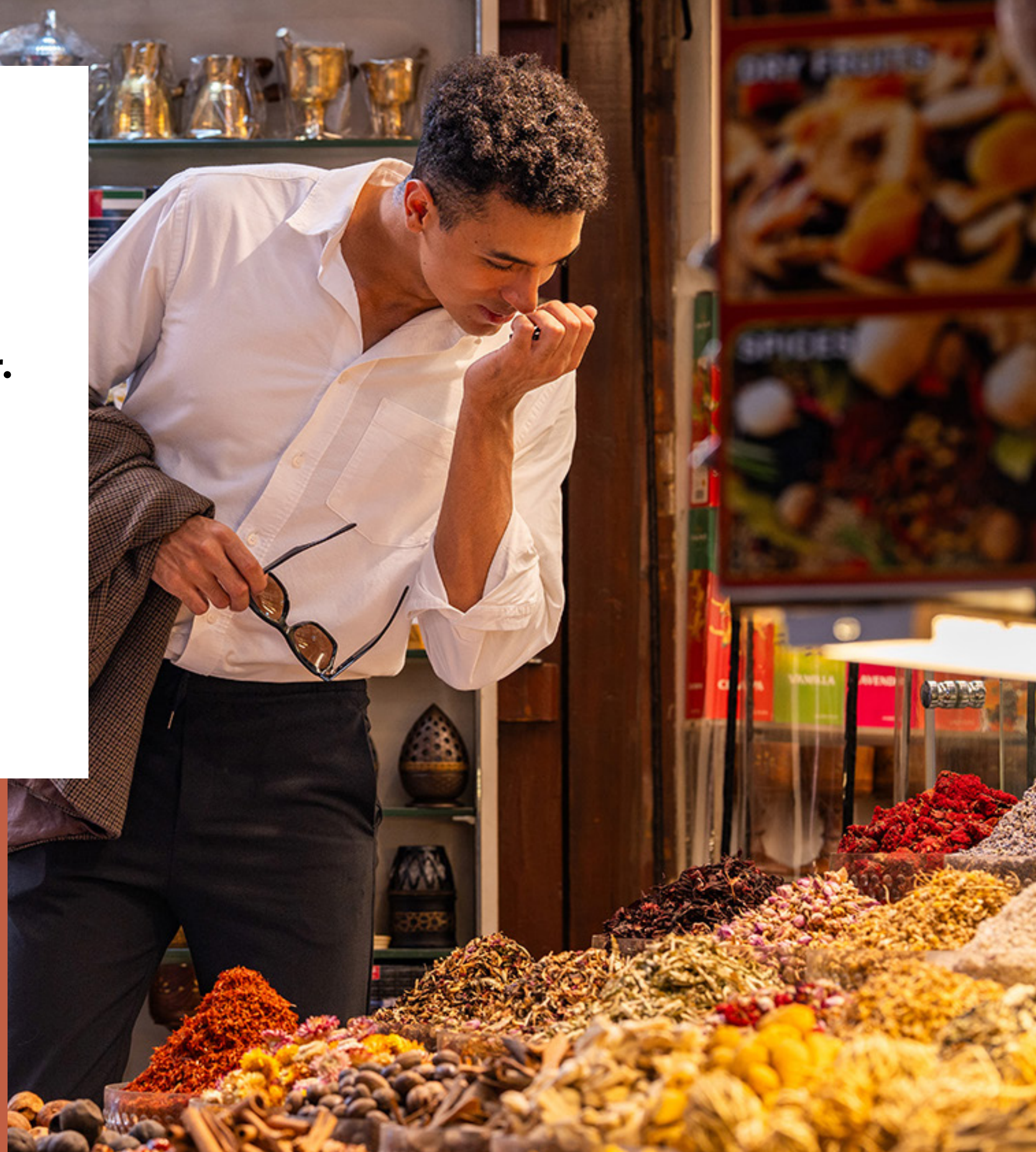
The industry placing a greater emphasis on sustainability will be vital to protect the very landscapes and experiences that guests travel for.

As part of this, influencing guest behaviour will remain a key priority.

Highlighting sustainability practices and offering guests a way to contribute - using the most effective messaging - can increase the likelihood of them contributing too.

After all, sustainability can - or indeed should - enhance the guest's experience in ways they might never have expected.

Getting this messaging right can not only achieve that behaviour change, but can do so in a way that leaves guests feeling empowered, inspired and that they've had a great experience from their stay.





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Research Report

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